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July 10, 1997

Mr. William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W., Room 222
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Petition for Expedited Rulemaking of LCI International Telecom Corp. and
Competitive Telecommunications Association; RM 9101

Dear Mr. Caton:

Please find enclosed for filing in the above-referenced matter an original and four copies of the Comments of USN Communications, Inc. Additionally, two copies have been forwarded to Janice Myles of the Common Carrier Bureau.

Please date-stamp and return the extra copy of the Comments in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ronald W. Gavillet
Executive Vice President,
USN Communications, Inc.

Enclosures

No. of Copies made _____
List Attached _____

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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
 Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of)	
)	
Petition for Expedited Rulemaking to)	RM 9101
Establish Reporting Requirements and)	
Technical Standards for Operations)	
Support Systems)	

COMMENTS OF USN COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

USN Communications, Inc. ("USN") respectfully submits the following comments on the above-captioned *Petition for Expedited Rulemaking* filed with the Commission on May 30, 1997, by LCI International Telecom Corp. and the Competitive Telecommunications Association. For the reasons discussed below, although USN is sympathetic to the goals of the LCI/CompTel Petition and agrees that the provision of efficient access to incumbent LEC operations support systems ("OSS") is a critical component of incumbent local exchange carriers' ("LECs") obligations under Section 251(c) of the Communications Act of 1934, USN recommends that the Commission be careful not to direct relief that is too broad or inflexible so as to penalize existing competitive providers. The Commission should not adopt any mandatory standards that would require competitive pioneers, such as USN, to modify or replace OSS interfaces that are already in operation; or that would create incentives for the incumbent LECs to render those existing interfaces obsolete.

1. Background and Statement of Interest

USN is one of the largest and fastest-growing competitive local exchange carriers ("CLECs") in the United States. Since initiating service in August, 1996, USN has sold over 80,000 local exchange access lines, installing over 46,000 in the second quarter of 1997 alone. USN operates as a reseller of local exchange, long distance, paging, Internet access, and other enhanced services, focusing primarily on the small business market. USN is based in Chicago and currently maintains offices at 27 locations in Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Ohio.¹

USN was the first CLEC to sign a total service resale agreement with a Bell Operating Company ("BOC") (Ameritech, in November, 1995) and the first to sign such a resale agreement with NYNEX (in July, 1996). USN has also served as the "beta test" customer for the OSS interfaces of Ameritech, Bell Atlantic, and NYNEX. USN therefore has extensive first-hand experience with the use of these OSS interfaces. In addition, as one of the largest users of these systems, USN has a direct and substantial interest in the subjects addressed in the LCI/CompTel Petition.

2. Comments

As a pioneer in the resale of local exchange services, USN knows the importance of efficient incumbent LEC OSS interfaces. Resellers' service orders and maintenance requests must be processed by the incumbent LEC with the same speed and accuracy as the incumbent LEC processes similar orders and requests from its end-user customers. If this parity is not achieved, then the

¹ Additional information on the company's services is available on the World Wide Web at <<http://www.usncomm.com>>.

reseller will be viewed in the market as providing an inferior quality service, unable to compete effectively. The Commission has, of course, already recognized the importance of OSS interfaces and adopted a parity requirement in its *First Local Competition Order*.²

Although USN recognizes the goals of the LCI/CompTel Petition, it is concerned by the broad and potentially burdensome relief sought by the Petition. The Petition proposes that the Commission conduct an "expedited rulemaking" to prescribe "specific performance criteria" for OSS access (Petition at 85). The Petitioners urge the Commission, in effect, to adopt the recommended standards of the Local Competition Users Group ("LCUG") as binding regulatory standards, and to "determine the appropriate minimum performance standards for every OSS function . . . and establish any related OSS requirements (*e.g.*, appropriate beta testing to ensure operability and scalability) that must be met by an incumbent LEC in both the resale and unbundled environments, including the network platform." (*Id.* at 88.) If adopted, this relief could effectively force every ILEC to redesign its OSS from scratch to meet the Commission-prescribed standards and could require extensive changes in the OSS interfaces that many incumbent LECs have already deployed.

Predictably, the Commission may receive a number of comments from incumbent LECs regarding the burden that would be placed upon them by adoption of the LCUG recommendations. It may not be so obvious, however, that adoption of these recommendations could be very burdensome to certain CLECs as well, especially those whose business today is dependent on the current systems. USN has invested substantial time and money in developing its own proprietary

² *Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, First Report and Order, 11 FCC Rcd 15499 (1996), Second Order on Reconsideration, FCC 96-476 (released Dec. 13, 1996).

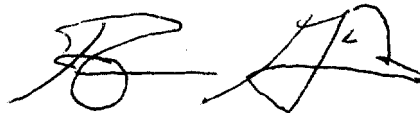
management information systems, which it uses both to manage its own internal information needs and to interface with the OSSs of the BOCs. Because USN's business is heavily focused on the resale of BOC local exchange services, interfaces with these carriers' OSSs are at the very heart of USN's provisioning, billing, and customer care systems. USN could not achieve the substantial volumes of installed lines it is attaining without such significant systems investment. If the Commission requires major changes to the OSS interfaces, USN may have to rewrite its own internal systems to conform to these changes, which could be a very major expense and could cause serious delays in USN's ability to roll out its services and service its users. Similarly, other CLECs that have undertaken in good faith to develop interfaces to the existing OSSs could be forced to duplicate that effort to conform to new systems; and smaller CLECs that have not yet completed the process of interfacing with BOC OSSs would be forced to delay their market entry to await the development of new systems that would conform with the newly-imposed standards.

The Commission should not underestimate the seriousness of these concerns. Development of OSS interfaces for its internal information system has been one of USN's top priorities during the 11 months it has been reselling local exchange service. This effort and investment has resulted in the deployment of a sophisticated proprietary systems that allow USN to offer superior customer service and responsiveness and simplified integrated billing for telecommunications and enhanced services. Any Commission regulations that required wholesale redesign of these systems would effectively destroy much of the value of USN's systems investment to date and force it to start virtually from scratch to rebuild its systems.

USN has been one of the pioneers in the local resale market. Like the pioneers of the American West, USN has had to blaze trails through uncharted territory, and the journey has not been without its perils. The OSS interfaces today still do not work perfectly — and no system could be expected to — and continued development undoubtedly will, and should, produce further improvements in the process over time. But the Commission should not allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good — the pioneers should not be forced to go back East and start the journey again.

Accordingly, if the Commission does initiate the rulemaking sought by CompTel and LCI, its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking should address specifically the ability of CLECs to continue using the OSS interfaces that have been implemented to date, regardless of whether those interfaces comply with any new standards that may be promulgated. The Commission should strive to ensure that any rules it adopts neither require, nor create incentives for, incumbent LECs to “obsolete” existing interfaces and force carriers such as USN to go back and rebuild systems that are already operational and working satisfactorily.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ronald W. Gavillet', written over a horizontal line.

Ronald W. Gavillet
Executive Vice President
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Ronald W. Gavillet, Executive Vice President of USN Communications, Inc., hereby certify that on this 10th day of July, 1997, I served a copy of the Comments of USN Communications, Inc., via first-class mail or federal express,* on the following parties:

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